

# The wolves are doing just fine

You must forgive us if we feel a bit gobsmacked every time a pro-wolf group runs to the judiciary to complain that their favorite apex predator isn't getting enough love from wildlife managers. It is an act aimed at getting publicity and raising money and has little or nothing to do with the welfare of gray wolves in the West.

The wolves are doing just fine. Really. There is no shortage of gray wolves. Some 55,000 live in Canada, and 10,000 or so are in British Columbia alone. Up to 11,000 live in Alaska. An estimated 4,000 roam the Great Lakes region of the U.S. More than 1,200 more are in Montana and Idaho. The populations in Washington state and Oregon are growing at an annual rate of more than 30 percent, meaning they will double every few years. Wolves have even taken up residence in Southern Oregon and Northern California.

So what, exactly, is the problem? The pro-wolfers appear to have won the battle, and the war. Why are they pressing their case against wildlife managers for not providing "adequate" protection for wolves?

In our opinion, it's about money. Environmental and conservation groups can never declare victory and go home. They can never congratulate themselves for a "mission accomplished" and move on with their lives. That's not how it works.

How it works is the wolf cause is held up as a "matter of the life and death," and is usually accompanied by a plea for money.

If a conservation group were to tell supporters, "Yep, the gray wolf populations are now in good shape, thanks to us (and a poorly written Endangered Species Act). It's time to get back to our lives," that group would never be able to raise a penny. Instead, their money pleas will continue, along with efforts to stop livestock grazing on public land. Because of poorly written federal laws and a judiciary that is easily swayed by fuzzy logic, these groups will continue.

The irony is the gray wolf would have succeeded even if radical conservation groups never existed. By reintroducing wolves to Idaho and Yellowstone National Park, and with protection from wildlife managers, the wolf population would have increased even without conservationists hollering from the back seat.

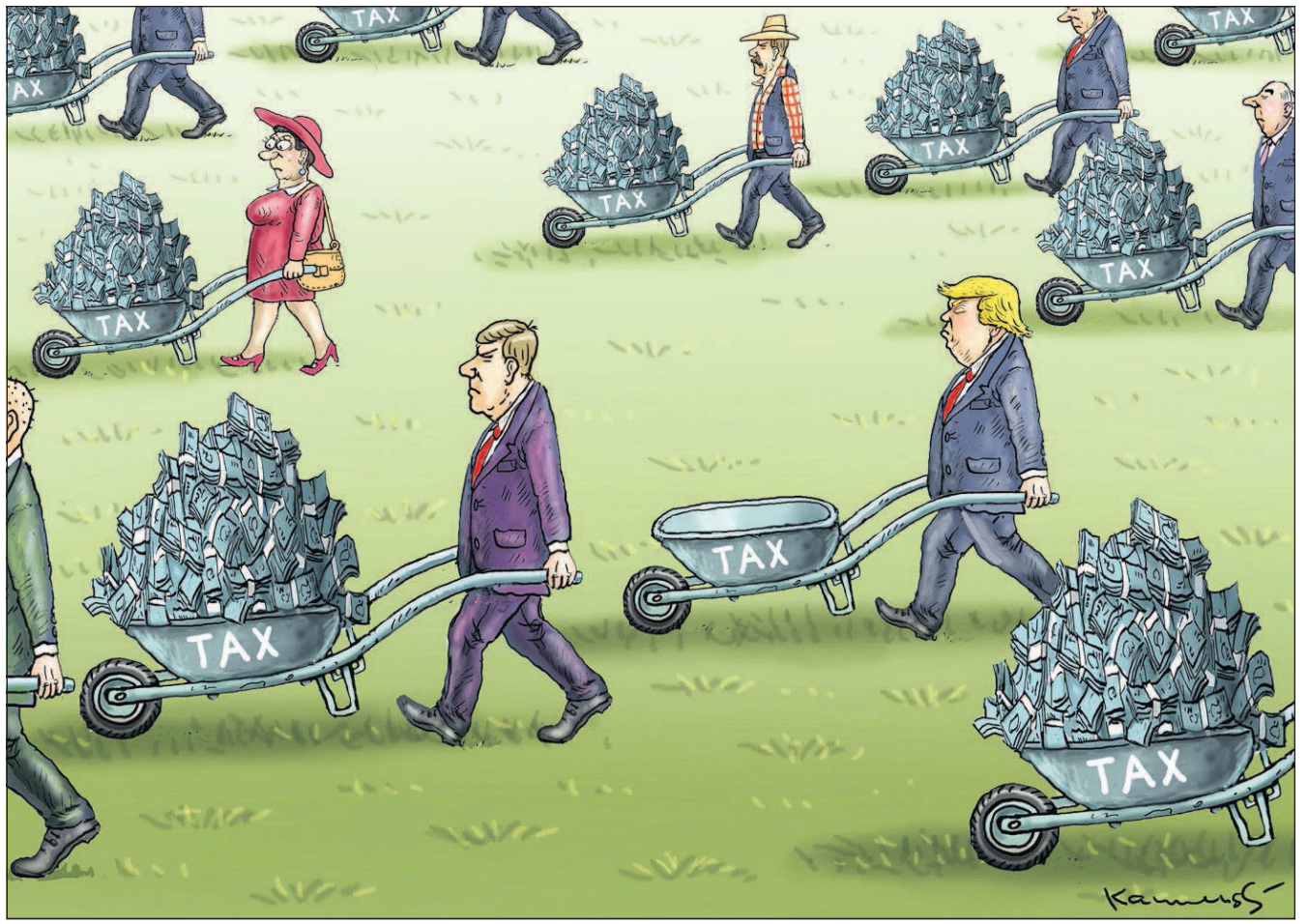
Wolves are robust, smart and have a survival instinct unsurpassed in nature. Because they live in packs and follow food sources, they spread naturally across the landscape. In fact, they were never reintroduced in Washington and Oregon; they dispersed from Idaho and British Columbia naturally. If they find food, they will stay. If they don't, they will move on.

A relatively small number of wolves have created problems by preying on livestock, killing sheep and cattle. If every one of those wolves had been killed immediately, the overall population would still be rapidly growing.

Yet in Oregon, wolf groups are again heading to court, arguing that wildlife managers are not providing adequate protection. Note: Wolves will not be killed anywhere in Oregon without the express permission of wildlife managers. In all phases of the state wolf plan, non-lethal methods of stopping wolves from attacking livestock must be undertaken before lethal removal will even be considered.

In our book, that's good protection for wolves. So it goes: lawsuits, fundraising, even the occasional mindless threats against anyone who happens to get caught up in the issue. And all the while wolves are doing just fine.

**EDITORIAL**  
The East Oregonian



# Tagging along with Squatch a sure path to pain

I've heard that if you iron out the peaks and canyons of Wallowa County it would lay flat the same size as Vermont or the universe or some large area. If you had ironed my legs last week, after backpacking with Jordan Manley straight up and down some of these ridges, I wouldn't have noticed because my body was dedicating all available sensory functions to the part of the brain that says, "What are you doing? Stop this."

Manley is a river guide, hunting guide, ski guide, horse packer, cowboy, former firefighter, traditional archer. Goes off into Hells Canyon for extended periods to hone his survivalist skills. Nickname is "Squatch," as in Sasquatch. I'm guessing because you're always trying to catch a glimpse of him but he's just a blurry figure in the distance. That was my experience anyway. I still can't feel my legs after our week-long archery elk hunt, but do feel strongly that I learned a lot from Jordan about survival tactics in the wilderness. Do not go backpacking with Jordan Manley. That's really the main thing I learned. It's just physically impossible to carry enough ibuprofen for the task, even in a large backpack.

My plan for hiking in was to take advantage of a recent invention known as a "trail." Jordan, however, was eager to



**AND FURTHERMORE**  
Jon Rombach

arrive in elk country and favored the approach of the shortest distance between two points being dragging Jon up and down mountains in a straight line until he falls over from exhaustion. We got there, eventually, though I'm sure Jordan wishes we'd gotten an earlier start that day and I wished we'd started last year.

Last year my great ambition was to make this same trip. Pack into the hinterlands with my bow and arrows and go after elk. I got ready, months in advance. Every morning I got up, stretched, exercised, did push-ups, skipped rope, rode my bike. Even went jogging, which is high on my list of being low on my list of things I like to do. I got into as good of backcountry elk hunting shape as I could. Then I got lucky and got my elk on a weekend outing with an easy pack to the truck. Huh. All those push-ups, completely unnecessary.

This year I didn't think I'd have time

for an extended trip so the physical training dropped off a tad. Does "tad" mean "completely?" Because the physical preparation dropped off completely. Then suddenly my schedule opened up, I gave Jordan a call and, next thing you know, I'm wobbling on a ridge on leg muscles reduced to overcooked fettuccine, a huge pack on my back with seven days of food and Jordan is pointing at elk.

"See 'em?" Jordan asked. "Far ridge, just above timberline. Looks like a good bull in there." Oh, I saw 'em, all right. And the far ridge was ... far. I explained to Jordan that I didn't have an elk tag for South America so didn't think we should go after these particular elk. I also reminded him that I'm in my forties. And tried to explain to him the concept of how trails work.

I survived hunting with a survivalist. Even came home with an elk. And I made a new best friend. That would be Tio, Jordan's saddle horse, which I got to ride when we went back in to pack out the meat. Love Tio. Can't say enough good things about that horse. Very patient. He let me rub his neck the entire way, whispering, "Thank you, Tio. Thank you."

Jon Rombach is a horse enthusiast and local columnist for The Chieftain.

# Late to the hunt, but eager

Over the course of 33 years living in Oregon, I have caught salmon and steelhead with bait, lures and flies, rowed whitewater big and small, and backpacked through wilderness where a herd of elk thundered across my trail.

But I have never hunted. Now that I am retired, I want to change that. This is something I have wanted to do since I was a kid.

Hunting was not a tradition in my family. I did persuade my parents to let me buy an Army surplus 1903 Springfield. The .30-06 rifle cost about \$20, and my plan was to sportsterize it to hunt for deer. I got part-way through the process, but never even fired it until a couple of years ago, after a gunsmith finished it for me. My father never hunted, there was no uncle who had ever hunted, and I moved away from the few friends who grew up to hunt. With no mentor, there was no hunting for me.

I moved to Oregon in 1983 to take a job as southern Oregon correspondent for The Associated Press, based in Grants Pass. Raising a family, I barely had time to teach myself to fish, let alone to hunt. But that changed when I retired last October.

In trying to understand why I want to

**GUEST COLUMNIST**

Jeff Barnard

do this, I have been reading a lot. I have found it is not that unusual. Tovar Cerulli, author of the book, "The Mindful Carnivore, A Vegetarian's Hunt for Sustainability," has even coined a term for this condition: Adult Onset Hunting.

I have killed plenty of fish. But I am less certain about killing a warm-blooded mammal — something with big brown eyes that can look at me and focus. People tell me they felt a combination of remorse and elation at their first kill. Do I really want that?

With all the anti-hunting sentiment out there, defenses of hunting abound. Hunting controls wildlife that damage crops and keeps populations at a point the diminishing habitat can sustain. Hunters take true responsibility for the meat they eat. Guns and ammo sales generate serious money for restoring wildlife habitat and helping non-game species headed for extinction. Since 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Act has drawn a surcharge on guns

and ammunition that goes to states for wildlife conservation and hunter safety. Ironically, the surge in sales of assault weapons and pistols is generating record amounts of money for conservation. This year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service distributed \$695,141,699 nationally, according to its website. Oregon's share was \$15,457,600.

But what motivates me is more in line with the late Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, who concluded that "The hunter is the alert man."

Similarly, natural history writer Pete Dunne writes in his essay, "Before the Echo," that as a birdwatcher, he is part of the audience watching the great play of the natural world. But as a hunter he is on the stage, one of the actors.

Fishing demands alertness and attention to detail. But I want to see and feel what comes from the hunt.

Jeff Barnard wrote for The Associated Press for 35 years, 33 of them based on Grants Pass, Ore. Since he retired last fall, he has been writing a blog about teaching himself to hunt for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

# Religion shouldn't supersede reason

Many who claim religious freedom want us to accept that they are attuned to divine will. God tells them their rights should permit superseding the civil rights of others, which in a secular society is simply called discrimination.

The argument, with some Constitutional justifications, requests an exception to their strongly held religious beliefs. The "free exercise" clause of the Constitution does not grant carte blanche to the effects resulting from such strong-

**LETTERS to the EDITOR**

ly held religious beliefs. There are limits, and for good reason. It is not difficult to see that an individual or religious group claiming a "right" based on religious grounds might also infringe on the civil rights of others (e.g. gay "rights").

But let's make this simpler yet. Any possible action I can think of in a so-

cial context may be claimed as part of my belief in God's will. This isn't some thought game. I may actually be sincere. Now, don't we quickly arrive at your "God's will" versus my "God's will"? Isn't this why we also have the Establishment Clause in the Constitution, which actually "establishes" our society as secular with a reliance on reason and conscience?

Patrick Dunroven  
Enterprise

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In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It's acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party's ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a policy we'll consider waiving only in unusual situations where reason

compels the exception. You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper's website, located at wallowa.com.

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MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com  
EDITOR Scot Heisel, editor@wallowa.com  
REPORTER Stephen Tool, stool@wallowa.com  
REPORTER Kathleen Ellyn, kellyn@wallowa.com  
NEWSROOM ASSISTANT editor@wallowa.com  
AD SALES CONSULTANT Jennifer Powell, jpowell@wallowa.com  
OFFICE MANAGER Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com

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